

UMBRELLA, UMBRELLA COVER, AND METHOD OF MAKING

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Cross-Reference to Related Application

5 This application claims priority to provisional application Serial No. 60/429,305, filed on November 26, 2002, "Umbrella and Associated Methods."

Field of the Invention

 The present invention relates to umbrellas and methods for constructing same.

Background of the Invention

10 Standard umbrellas comprise a frame having eight ribs extending outwardly from a center shaft. The ribs support a cover when in the open position. The cover is constructed by sewing together eight triangular pieces of material. The sewing process
15 creates a natural curve to the cover material that allows it to conform to the shape of the frame. The cover is then tacked to the ribs along each of the eight seams. Each tack is positioned approximately 10-12 inches from the outer tip of the rib.

 Decorated umbrellas are typically made by screen printing the triangles of material prior to sewing the triangles together onto the ribs of the eight-rib frame. This causes a
20 design to be segmented rather than appearing unitary.

 One umbrella having a one-piece cover is known in the art that comprises a stretchable, unseamed material glued onto a 16-rib frame. The frame is oversized and

flatter than customary umbrellas, and is believed more expensive to fabricate than standard umbrellas. Further, such prior art umbrellas have a hemmed outer edge.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 A first aspect of the present invention is directed to an umbrella cover. The umbrella cover of the present invention comprises a unitary piece of material that can be decorated, such as by printing, without segmentation. The cover comprises an octagonal piece of material having eight corners. The cover has eight generally triangular slits therein extending one from each corner of the octagon toward, but in spaced relation from, a
10 center point, a point of each triangle at the inner end of the slit. The sides of each slit are sewn together to form a dart.

 A second aspect of the present invention is directed to an umbrella. The umbrella comprises a cover as described above and a frame to which the cover is affixed. The cover is affixed to an eight-rib frame, with each dart tacked adjacent a flexion point in a rib.

15 A third aspect of the invention is directed to a method of fabricating an umbrella cover. The method comprises the steps of cutting eight generally triangular slits in an octagonal piece of material, the slits extending inward from each corner of the octagonal piece of material toward, but in spaced relation from, a center point of the material. Darts are formed by sewing together the sides of each slit.

20 A fourth aspect of the present invention is directed to a method of fabricating an umbrella. The method comprises the steps of making an umbrella cover as described above. Each dart is then tacked adjacent a flexion point in a rib of an eight-rib frame.

In an alternate embodiment, believed at present to represent a best mode of the umbrella of the present invention, the method of making an umbrella cover comprises the steps of folding a substantially octagonal unitary sheet of fabric in half along a line extending approximately from a midpoint of a first side to a midpoint of a second side. The second side is generally opposed to the first side. Being octagonal, the sheet has eight sides, each adjacent two sides meeting at a corner.

A slit is cut at each corner, each slit extending from the respective corner to an apex toward, but in spaced relation from, a centerpoint of the sheet. The slit is substantially isosceles triangular in shape. For each slit, opposing sides thereof are joined together to form darts. Finally, piping is affixed along the eight sides.

In a general case, one of skill in the art will appreciate that the invention is not intended to be limited to an octagonal element, and that any polygon could in principle be used with a correspondingly ribbed frame with the same technique to create an umbrella cover and umbrella.

The features that characterize the invention, both as to organization and method of operation, together with further objects and advantages thereof, will be better understood from the following description used in conjunction with the accompanying drawing. It is to be expressly understood that the drawing is for the purpose of illustration and description and is not intended as a definition of the limits of the invention. These and other objects attained, and advantages offered, by the present invention will become more fully apparent as the description that now follows is read in conjunction with the accompanying drawing.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a top plan view of a template for a first embodiment of an umbrella cover of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a top plan view of an umbrella cover of **FIG. 1** prior to forming darts therein.

5 **FIG. 3** is a bottom plan view of a portion of an umbrella of **FIG. 1**.

FIG. 4 is a top plan view of the folded and cut sheet of a second embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 5 illustrates the outside of the cover of **FIG. 4** with piping thereon.

FIG. 6 illustrates the inside of the cover of **FIG. 4** with piping thereon.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

A description of the preferred embodiments of the present invention will now be presented with reference to **FIGS. 1-6**.

As stated above, a first embodiment of the invention comprises an umbrella and
15 cover using an eight-rib frame (**FIGS. 1-3**). An umbrella cover **10** comprises a unitary piece of material **11** as shown in **FIG. 1**, having the exemplary measurements shown thereon. The cover **10** comprises an octagonal piece of material **11** having eight corners **12**. In the embodiment shown, the material piece **11** extends 118.1 cm between diametrically opposed corners **12,12'**. Each side **13** has a length **14** of 37.3 cm.

20 In a preferred embodiment, the material piece **11** comprises a woven material having substantially no elasticity, except along the bias. The material in an exemplary embodiment comprises either 75D x 190T 100% nylon taffeta with acrylic coating for a

screen-printed umbrella cover or 190T 100% polyester with P.U. coating for a four-color process paper transfer printing. The cutting technique preferably avoids the bias to avoid substantial stretching, which would cause uneven tension around the perimeter of the cover and an ill fit on the frame.

5 The cover **10** has eight generally triangular slits **15** therein (FIG. 2) extending one from each corner **12** of the octagon **11** toward, but in spaced relation from, a center point **16**, a point **17** of each triangular slit **15** at the inner end thereof. In the embodiment shown, the slit **15** is approximately 21.6 cm long. The sides **18,18'** of each slit **15** are sewn together to form a dart **19** (FIG. 3). The cover **10** is tacked **20** to an eight-rib frame **21**, with
10 each dart **19** tacked adjacent a flexion point **22** in a rib **23**, to form a 46-inch umbrella **24**. Preferably the tacking point is approximately 8 inches from the outer tip **25** of the rib **23**.

 The method of fabricating an umbrella **24** and cover **10** comprises the steps of cutting eight generally triangular slits in an octagonal piece of material, the slits extending inward from each corner of the octagonal piece of material toward, but in spaced relation
15 from, a center point of the material. A desired graphic or indicia may be printed on the cover **10**, with the one-piece cover permitting the printing of a unitary graphic that does not have to be pieced together. Darts are formed by sewing together the sides of each slit. Each dart is then tacked adjacent a flexion point in a rib of an eight-rib frame.

 A second embodiment of an umbrella cover **30** (FIGS. 4-6), believed at the time of
20 filing to represent a preferred embodiment, is made by folding a folding a substantially square sheet of fabric **31** in half along a line **32** extending approximately from a midpoint **33** of a first side **34** to a midpoint **35** of an opposed second side **36** to form two

substantially equal-area rectangles. In a preferred embodiment, the sheet comprises nylon material, such as 190T nylon. Each of the two free corners **37,38** is then cut off to form an octagonal sheet of fabric. Alternatively, the corners **37,38** could be cut off prior to folding.

5 The substantially octagonal unitary sheet of fabric now has eight sides, each adjacent two sides (for example, **39,40**) meeting at a corner **41**.

Next a slit **42** is cut at each corner, each slit extending from the respective corner **41** to an apex **43** toward, but in spaced relation from, a centerpoint **44** of the sheet. The slit **42** is substantially isosceles triangular in shape. In a particular embodiment, the slit **42**
10 has a length approximately one-quarter a length **45** between a corner **41** and the centerpoint **44**.

For each slit **42**, with the sheet unfolded, opposing sides **53** thereof are then joined together to form darts **19**, for example, by sewing the slit sides **53** together.

In an exemplary embodiment for a standard 8-panel umbrella, dimensions are as
15 follows: side **46** of square piece of fabric, 113 cm; side **47** of octagonal sheet, 40.2 cm; length **48** from midpoint of fold **32** to midpoint of side **40**, 55.5 cm; length **49** of slit side, 15.2 cm; base **50** of slit, 5.1 cm; and length **51** of dart, 20.3 cm.

Finally, piping **52** is affixed along the eight sides, for example, by sewing the piping **52** around a periphery of the cover (FIGS. 5 and 6). The sewing of the piping **52** may be
20 accomplished with the use of, for example, an edge binder pipe. Preferably the piping **52** comprises a same material as the fabric sheet, most preferably a nylon material such as

190T nylon. For the exemplary measurements given above, the piping material comprises an elongated strip 320 cm long and 2.25 cm wide.

The piping **52** has been found to be an important feature of this embodiment **30**, since it has been found to reinforce the cover **30**, permitting the cover **30** to be stretched to fit the frame and minimize wrinkles in the finished product.

In order to complete an umbrella, each dart **19** is affixed to a frame rib **23** as in FIG. 3.

It will be understood by one of skill in the art that the measurements presented herein for both embodiments **10,30** are exemplary, and not intended to be limiting, and that other sizes are easily contemplated by one of skill in the art, including other polygonal cover/rib number combinations, other cover materials, and other dimensions.

In the foregoing description, certain terms have been used for brevity, clarity, and understanding, but no unnecessary limitations are to be implied therefrom beyond the requirements of the prior art, because such words are used for description purposes herein and are intended to be broadly construed. Moreover, the embodiments of the apparatus illustrated and described herein are by way of example, and the scope of the invention is not limited to the exact details of construction.